

Senior/Community Center Study and Planning Committee

Wednesday, March 23, 2016

7:00 pm

Nichols Room, Trumbull Town Hall

Present: Co-Chairmen Joseph Pifko and Daniel Marconi; Committee Members Lori Hayes-O'Brien, Joseph Costa, Jeannine Stauder, Rachel Yahwak and Richard Seaman

Also Present: Lynn Arnow, Chief of Staff; Timothy Herbst (7:25 to 8:10 pm); John Marsilio (8:20 to 8:30 pm)

Members Absent: Dawn Cantafio

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chairman Pifko at 7:00 pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

1. Patrice Yagowski, 5324 Main Street – wanted to know where the committee is in the process; would like to understand the rationale for the Senior/Community Center; know how it will enhance the town and impact property values.

Past Minutes:

Correction was made under Preparation of Presentation to the Town Council, Page 2, first paragraph; second to last line should read: "sustainability) and wrap up by Mr. Pifko." Motion was made by Mrs. Yahwak to approve the minutes of February 25, 2016 as amended. Seconded by Mrs. Hayes-O'Brien and approved.

Town Council Presentation Review and Action Plan

The Committee discussed the Town Council meeting. They felt it was very good, clear and concise and that it covered all aspects of the project. However, they felt the comments made by the public were rude which cast a very negative tone overall. It was felt the large crowd was due to the committee's recommendation of Island Brook Park as a potential site which was ultimately found to be unsuitable because it falls within a 100 year flood plan. However, at some point a site will need to be selected which will be in someone neighborhood.

Mr. Marconi noted research and comments from the surveys gave the committee adequate information as to what is needed in a Senior Center/Community Center. The challenge is to develop the layout and the committee is now comfortable and will need assistance in developing a foot print for the building.

Mr. Pifko explained that the focus of the original committee was a senior center/community center/library. However, this changed because of the results of the library study and the library's decision to move forward independently. The committee now has a new focus to make a

multifunctional facility for a senior/community center. There seemed to be some confusion on the focus of the committee and Town Council, at its' March meeting, changed the name to Senior/Community Center Study and Planning Committee. Mr. Pifko noted if residents have a concern regarding the project, they should bring them to the Town Council meetings as this committee has no authority to make any decisions. The committee is fulfilling a task as assigned by the Town Council to develop plans for the project including site recommendations. The Town Council is the deciding body on this project. Mr. Pifko noted that this project should not be political and was not until the Town Council meeting.

Mr. Marconi discussed the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) that recommended first a new community center and second a new senior center.

Mrs. Arnow noted stated the presentation to the Council was outstanding and discussed the fact that the library was included in the study committee because they had not done their feasibility study. The POCD acknowledges the need for more community space. She felt it was great to see the public come out and be more aware of the project but would like to have seen more helpful suggestions instead of negative comments. Suggestions should be enhancing the project. The best mechanism to comment is on the town website where there is a link to the chairman of the committee or email Mrs. Arnow. It was noted that all documents relevant to the project to date are posted on the website with the minutes. As the project progresses, all work products will be open to the public on the website.

First Selectman Herbst entered the meeting at 7:25 pm. He discussed the background of the proposed community center noting that it was first proposed in the late 1990s and a committee was appointed. The project was dropped at that time. The POCD was updated in 2012 which is a tool for Planning and Zoning and it provides a ten year plan for the entire community. One of the key recommendations for consideration is a community center. The demographics of the town have changed since the late 1990s with data shows the population is getting older. He noted the Council meeting bothered him because the comments pitted seniors against parents of school age children. As First Selectman, his job is to govern all residents in the town.

Mr. Herbst noted he requested the Senior Center Director, Ms. Fereira, to provide membership numbers for the center. She also contacted neighboring centers to see how many Trumbull residents are members at their facilities. The numbers provided were discouraging as he noted these residents pay taxes to the Town of Trumbull yet cannot get services that they pay for. These other facilities are more modern and user friendly and they provide programs that the seniors enjoy. We are not providing the same level of services the seniors are looking for. A new director for the Senior Center will be on board July 1, 2016 and this director should be involved in the decision as to programming. A meeting has been scheduled for April 11 with the seniors to provide them an opportunity to comment on the project or any topic.

Mrs. Hayes-O'Brien noted there needs to be a better way to get the public involved. Also, she noted she had expressed her concern at past meetings that residents had not been surveyed after comments made on social media and general discussions with the public. She also took issue with the 90 day timeline for choosing a site imposed by Mr. Herbst. Mr. Herbst noted he recommended the committee find a site in 90 days so that something not political would not become political. He wanted the process to move along and he does not want this to become a political talking point. The three main principles for the project should be centrally located, accessible and function as an emergency center. Mrs. Hayes-O'Brien noted those concepts have been incorporated into the project but the time line imposed made it more difficult. Mr. Seaman felt most of the committee did not feel pressure to make a site decision within the 90 days.

Mr. Marconi noted the committee has been meeting every two weeks, and at times, every week on this project. The committee has worked hard and Mr. Herbst apologized for the abuse they endured at the Council meeting.

Melanie Flavin, 23 Louis Street – directed a question to the committee regarding the fact that most of the citizens do not feel that they have been asked what they want and would like clear understanding of how the public was informed, how much money has been spent and what were the results. Lengthy discussion was held regarding the information provided to the public including survey results, media information, letters in the Trumbull Times and public committee meetings. It was noted that a direct mailing to the residents was considered but survey responses are often very poor and the cost was high.

Mr. Herbst left the meeting at 8:10 pm.

Jean Gibbs, 26 Lafayette Drive – spoke regarding the survey monkey and its use for gathering information. She suggested putting a survey in a mailing from the town to every resident, such as the water bill, that would not present an additional cost. Copies could also be on the website.

Discussion was held regarding what additional information would be gathered by conducting another survey. The goal of the committee was to define the facility. It was unclear what would be asked in another survey. Mrs. Arnow noted the results of the two surveys are online.

Discussion was held regarding the benefit of a new senior center if seniors are using other facilities and the membership numbers for Trumbull are so small. It was felt by the committee that if they built a new facility, residents would be inclined to use it over going out of town. Mrs. Gibbs felt the committee should look at Indian Ledge Park as a possible site.

Mr. John Marsilio entered the meeting at 8:20 pm. He spoke to the committee regarding the next step in the process which is an RFQ for design professionals. At this point, the project will be sent. The committee should appoint a sub-committee to assist the design personnel and help them develop a scope of services including site evaluations. There are three steps to the project – schematic development, design development and construction plan. He noted the Town Council and the Board of Finance reduced funding for the project and there are enough funds to do a schematic design and some site evaluations. It was felt the Purchasing Director should be asked for an RFQ template which should include evaluation sites.

Mr. Marsilio exited the meeting at 8:30 pm.

Motion was made by Mr. Marconi to work with Mr. Marsilio to form an RFQ. Seconded by Mrs. Yahwak. Mrs. Arnow felt Kevin Bova should be asked to the next meeting to review the template. Motion approved unanimously.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on March 31, 2016 at 5:00 pm to accommodate the budget review meetings that start at 7:00 pm.

Adjournment

There being no further business, motion was made by Mrs. Yahwak, seconded by Mrs. Stauder, to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 pm. Approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Crandall

Clerk

These minutes are considered a draft until approved at the next meeting of the Senior/Community Center Study and Planning Committee.